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THE FACTOR OF TECHNIQUE IN THE DETECTION OF THE INFLUENZA BACILLUS.

One of the puzzling features in connection with the bacteriological investigations of outbreaks of epidemic influenza has been the varying frequency with which Pfeiffer's bacillus has been detected in different communities. There has been a suspicion that variations in technique may have accounted in large part for the varying results, and that this is an important element is shown by the following circumstances:

During March, 1919, an outbreak of influenza occurred in a western State. In this epidemic a very skillful bacteriologist failed to detect the influenza bacillus in appreciable numbers of cases, though he used approved methods which had given him positive results earlier in the pandemic.

In order to determine how far the chosen method was responsible for the failure to detect the organism, the Public Health Service detailed two bacteriologists, who had been able to isolate the influenza bacillus from almost every case in an outbreak that occurred in an eastern community, to attempt the detection of the organism in the locality where others had failed. These workers succeeded in cultivating the organisms from about 80 per cent of the cases of influenza studied. The cultures were made in four different blood media from swabs rubbed over the nasopharynx, while cultures made from the sputum of the same cases at the same time by the bacteriologist in charge still failed to show the influenza bacillus in a large majority of the cases.

This experience clearly indicates that the factors of individual technique and of experience in the isolation of this particular organism may make a very great difference in the results obtained with any given group of cases.

This evidence is not presented as having any particular significance with respect to the possible etiological relation of Pfeiffer's influenza bacillus to epidemic influenza, a question which is still undecided.

A DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FOR CANADA.

For some years there has been an active movement in Canada for the establishment of a department of health. This movement has recently culminated in the introduction into the House of Commons and the final passage of a bill creating a Federal department of health for the Dominion.

The act aims at placing health as a foundation of government, thereby assuring to the people that the vital problems of health which concern a nation and upon which depend its very existence, con-